



# NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview, June 8, 2017

## Guadalupe ~ Oral History Interview

Corinn Williams

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Interview with Guadalupe, June 8, 2017.

## **Background**

**Name of Person Interviewed:** Guadalupe

### **Facts about this Person:**

|                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Age               | 47          |
| Sex               | Female      |
| Occupation        | Fish packer |
| Residence         | New Bedford |
| Ethnic Background | El Salvador |

**Interviewer:** Corinn Williams [CW]

**Transcriber:** Pricilla Gamboa [PG]

**Interview location:** New Bedford

**Date of Interview:** June 8, 2017

### **Key Words**

El Salvador, New Bedford, cod, Salmon, fish cutting machine

### **Abstract**

Guadalupe is an employee at a company that cleans fish. She shares her work experiences and life experiences.

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[00:00] Introductions. Cleaning fish is her main job but she does many other jobs. Originally from San Vicente, El Salvador. Grew up going to school then began to work in a lab drawing blood. She had a degree in health sciences in El Salvador. The war in El Salvador and earthquakes caused her to leave and come to America.

[08:35] Life changes from arriving to America from El Salvador. It takes time to get used to the surroundings. Family member helped her get the job in the fishing industry. Coming to America was tough because she had no idea what her job was going to be. Sometimes it is difficult to meet the quota at work and some employers are tough.

[13:01] Describes the changing of times of cleaning fish. Before they had to do it all by hand with a knife, now they have a machine that helps them clean. The machine cleans the fish faster than by hand. The machine has helped increase production. She has been working in the same company for around 3 years. She left for a while to live in Maryland, but she did not like the area so she moved back to New Bedford.

[18:10] Normal work day is usually early but since she has a child that rides the morning bus her work day starts around 7 AM. Other coworkers begin the day at 4 am. Co-workers that arrive earlier use sharp tongs to remove bones from salmon. She sometimes cleans or sometimes packs the fish. Fish is also weighed at the factory.

[24:54] Fish comes from different places, unaware exactly from where. She worked a while for a company based out of Canada. The most interesting part of job is the actual cleaning of the fish. Taking the bones out and making sure it is clean. The fish is always cold and the work environment is cold, she waits a while before entering her home, to make sure her body temperature is adjusted. Work environment is similar to an assembly line.

[33:34] Most of the fish that is packed is for stores. Talks about the diversity of coworkers. Talks about how sometimes there is an inequality at the job because supervisors choose favorites. She still hopes to continue to work there. Believes wage raises are sometimes not given fairly. Paid vacations are not given to employees.

[41:41] Compares jobs in El Salvador to jobs here in America. Uniforms are required and safety equipment. If injuries occur at work they must notify the supervisor at once. Women do different jobs than men because men are required to do more heavy lifting. Differences between women and men at the job is discussed.

[49:48] Work hours are discussed. Typically works less than 30 hours a week. Busy weeks are around 50 hours. Working overtime is sometimes hard for her because she has a child. Her daughter used to work in fish processing but switched over to a job in a textile factory. Advice for future fishing industry employers is to always be respectful to others. Having a small child has caused her a little bit of struggles with work hours. She says that family is always first and her job is second.

[01:00:50] Discusses struggles at work, with getting time off and tough superiors. It is a tough job. She hopes to continue working there in the future.

[01:04:59] End of recording.